

My Story is like so many other parents of dyslexic children. My son was a happy healthy baby. We read to him and provided him with the same educational experiences his older sister had gotten (she is reading 2 grade levels above). He went to preschool at his current school when he was three. He was resistant to learning to write his name, but knew the alphabet orally. When he entered kindergarten it became apparent he was struggling to put letter names, sounds, and written letters together. I talked to his teachers. The recommendation was to keep practicing. I talked to his pediatrician and was told the same thing. The next conference we had with his teacher showed he knew more sight words than he should given his inability to recognize letters and their corresponding sounds. We were told to get an audiologist evaluation. He passed with little effort. After a series of testing by the school and school psychologist it was deemed he had a specific learning disability in reading. We knew we needed more help and looked into getting a tutor. The tutor (she is a speech language pathologist working in the CT public school system) reviewed the schools evaluations and determined he needed more testing. His school unfortunately didn't have all of the knowledge they needed to screen and test children with suspected dyslexia. His tutor ultimately determined that he was dyslexic and has been working with him ever since. The tutor costs \$100/hr. In CT tutors range from \$60-100/hr. There are so many of us parents that are spending our own money to help our kids learn the way they need to be taught. My son goes to school all day in our public education system, only to have to be tutored outside of school. I think most parents are happy to provide support and reinforcement of their child's learning at school, but when we feel we need to be the teacher and hire someone to tutor them it's a system failure.

I'd like to acknowledge that Connecticut has done great work in the fight to recognize dyslexia. Many states do not recognize the "D" word. I want our great state to be a leader around the country to provide comprehensive education to all students, including those with dyslexia. We need to provide a bill that requires teachers who teach children with dyslexia to get evidenced based training in screening and implementing proven research based multisensory programs. Many schools have purchased these evidence based programs like Wilson or S.P.I.R.E, but research shows if they are not implemented with fidelity they are not effective. Why spend money on these programs if they aren't going to be effective? We need to stop failing our students, teachers, and tax payers. Research shows that a child who doesn't read on grade level by 3rd grade is four times more likely to drop out of high school. Dyslexia affects 1 in 5 people. Reading has been clearly researched to predict future success. Let's invest in our future.

I am providing you with a written testimony and will not be testifying at the hearing. I support SB 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia, but I am requesting that an amendment that candidates seeking a remedial reading endorsement complete a graduate level program aligned with evidence based practices and IDA knowledge and practice standards for teachers of reading.

Thank You!

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